



PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
(406) 444-3064
FAX (406) 444-3036

State-Tribal Relations Committee

66th Montana Legislature

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Darryl Lacounte, Acting Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs
MS-4606
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

September 16, 2019

Christopher Wray, Director
FBI Headquarters
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001
(202) 324-3000

Dear Directors Lacounte and Wray,

I write on behalf of the Montana Legislature's State-Tribal Relations Committee (STRC) to urge the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Bureau of Investigations to participate in an official capacity in the work of the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force.

The 2019 Montana Legislature created the task force in the absence of a federal solution to the jurisdictional bureaucracy and lack of data gathering that can delay missing persons investigations in Indian Country. The task force is asked to identify jurisdictional barriers as well as strategies to improve interagency communication, cooperation, and collaboration.

The STRC recently learned that while the BIA and FBI can be major players in missing persons investigations in Indian Country, local agents are not authorized to formally participate in the task force's work. This seems a shortsighted approach that will lead to missed opportunities in defraying the impact of violent crime in Montana.

Directors, the STRC appreciates your attention to this matter and hopes you will respond to our concerns. Please let me know if I or the STRC staff can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Sen. Jason Small, Chair

cc: U.S. Interior Secretary David Bernhardt
U.S. Attorney General William Barr
BIA District V Commander Doug Noseep
FBI Supervisory Senior Resident Agent Steve Payne
U.S. Senator Steve Daines
U.S. Senator Jon Tester
U.S. Representative Greg Gianforte